



Isle of Wight Council

Tenancy Strategy Statement

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Isle of Wight Council (IOWC) and its housing partners have produced this strategy statement to recognise the additional local flexibility that fixed term tenancies may provide. This over-arching strategy statement has been produced to set an initial broad principle in our approach to granting tenancies for affordable housing on the Isle of Wight.
- 1.2. The Government is enabling providers of social housing with the option to use the flexibility of fixed term tenancies, which in most cases will be for a minimum of five years. This recognises that presently tenancies are granted by local authorities or registered housing providers to meet an immediate need, such as overcrowding or homelessness, which may change over time resulting in homes being under-occupied or occupied by tenants who could afford open market accommodation.
- 1.3. We have produced this strategy to help provide a consistent approach to registered providers who own stock on the Island.
- 1.4. Registered providers are expected to have due regard to local authority's strategies in framing their own policies and we have worked closely with colleagues from registered providers, and other agencies in the development of this strategy statement. We will continue to work in partnership to make sure that registered providers' policies and the local authority's Tenancy Strategy work together to meet housing needs and priorities on the Island.
- 1.5. We are committed to ensuring this approach is applied to the development and implementation of tenancy strategies. This will help to make best use of stock across the whole area and create more sustainable communities, however it is recognised that different approaches may be needed for rural and urban areas and for some considerations between Parishes to account for local needs.
- 1.6. This strategy does not advise on rent setting nor does it consider tenancy management issues.
- 1.7. The strategy does not detail changes we may make to our allocations policies or housing registers or our choice based lettings arrangements, as we will carry out a separate review of these to reflect any changes enacted as part of the introduction of the Localism Act.
- 1.8. It is important to note that registered providers must 'have regard to' our tenancy strategy in developing their own tenancy policies. In addition, they have already signed their contracts with the Homes and Communities Agency over the development of the new affordable rent product for the delivery of affordable housing until 2015, which means they will already have plans in place. However, we ask that registered providers holding stock on the Island review their own tenancy policies after the publication of this strategy to ensure that, wherever possible, their policies work to compliment the joint aims of this strategy.

2. Aims

- 2.1. The Tenancy Strategy is intended to provide broad guidance to registered providers operating on the Isle of Wight, informing their policies and practices to produce lettings for housing applicants that meet local housing need and improve the affordable housing market functioning across the island. It seeks to do this by:

- 2.2. Enabling the best use of affordable housing across the island through greater tenancy flexibility, whilst maintaining a reasonable level of security of tenure to tenants.
- 2.3. Providing broad guidance and direction to registered providers regarding their use of fixed tenancies.
- 2.4. Indicating to current and prospective tenants, what they can expect from the tenancies offered by registered providers managing stock on the island.
- 2.5. Supporting the development and continuation of sustainable mixed communities
- 2.6. Addressing the issues of affordability by seeking to maximize the availability and turnover of social rented properties and accepting the need for Affordable Rent properties as a means of securing additional affordable rented homes.
- 2.7. Helping to meet local housing needs

3. Strategic Links

- 3.1. This Tenancy Strategy has a number of important links to other key national and local documents, strategies and policies, including
 - The Islands Allocation Policy
 - Island Homefinder Choice based lettings framework
 - IOWC Homelessness strategy
 - Use of private rented sector to prevent homelessness
 - IOWC Housing Strategy
 - Appendix 1 provides a fuller summary of these links.

4. Summary of Evidence

- 4.1. Appendix 2 to this strategy sets out a range of data and information that has been used to inform this strategy. Key points to note are:
 - Approximately 90% of all stock across the Island is private sector homes (this includes both private rented and owner-occupied).
 - Demographic evidence shows the population on the Island has increased between 1991 to mid 2010 by 10.4% and is predicted to continue to do so, particularly amongst single person households and older people.
 - Between 1991 and 2012 house prices have increased by 20.16%.
 - The number of people accepted onto the island's social housing waiting list has significantly increased in recent months and currently stands at a high of 6,415 as at 8 June 2012.
 - Homelessness acceptances have fallen by 73% since 2005/6; the use of temporary accommodation has dropped by 60 since 2005/6%.
 - The supply of new affordable housing has grown by an average of 175 properties a year since April 2006
- 4.2. The population continues to increase, together with the number of households on the housing register and the number of those in housing need. This is taking place against a backdrop of fewer new dwelling starts and completions, and rising

house prices. Consequently, the need to make best use of existing and future social / affordable housing stock is paramount.

4.3. Appendix 4 also outlines current issues being faced by island residents.

5. Tenancy Types

5.1. This section sets out the broad approach to fixed term tenancies with regards to procedures, reviews and appeals to meet the overriding objective of maximising the best use of affordable housing stock and taking account of the aims set out in Section 2 above.

5.2. Use of tenancies

5.2.1. The IOWC encourages the use of flexible fixed term tenancies where possible, to maximise the best use of affordable housing stock but acknowledges that there will still be circumstances where lifetime tenancies will be granted.

5.2.2. The Council will expect the following households to be offered the security of a lifetime tenancy:

- Those living in specialist accommodation for older persons such as sheltered, independent living or extra care schemes or older persons living in general needs accommodation that is appropriate to their needs
- Those with severe physical disabilities, learning disabilities or mental health issues who are living in specialist or adapted accommodation or general needs accommodation that is appropriate to their needs

5.2.3. Where register providers wish to use flexible fixed term tenancies, we would expect them to be granted for a minimum length of five years. Those wishing to provide shorter tenancies between 2-5 years will need to demonstrate on what basis this is justified.

5.3. Tenancy reviews

5.3.1. We expect that registered providers' tenancy policies will state that not less than six months before a flexible tenancy is due to end, it must be subject to a review.

5.3.2. If it is decided, as a result of the tenancy review, that a tenancy will not be renewed, written notice advising the tenant of such will be served. The notice must contain the reasons for the decision and, at the same time, notify the tenant of their right to appeal. Should a tenant appeal and fail to have the decision overturned, the landlord will be able to seek possession of the property.

5.3.3. We expect that registered providers tenancy policies will provide clear criteria setting out the circumstance in which tenancies will not normally be renewed. We expect that these criteria will cover issues such as;

- Under occupation
- Overcrowding
- Properties with adaptations
- Where tenants have sufficient income or assets to meet their own housing needs

- 5.3.4. The tenancy policy should not seek to address housing management issues that can be dealt with through existing processes.
- 5.3.5. Registered providers tenancy policies should make it clear that tenants will be made aware of these criteria when taking their tenancy.
- 5.3.6. It is recognised that there may be circumstances in which it would be unreasonable to expect someone to move even if the relevant criteria applied, and we would anticipate a registered providers tenancy policy will explain when a tenancy might be allowed to continue.

5.4. Notice period

- 5.4.1. When fixed term tenancies are coming to an end, it is essential that tenancy policies provide that the tenant is given sufficient notice so that they can seek advice about their options. Accordingly, we expect that notice will be served 6 months before the tenancy is due to end.
- 5.4.2. Well in advance of a tenancy being terminated (at least six months), we expect that the registered providers will work proactively with the IOWC and with the tenant, to assist them to explore their options for alternative housing, which could include home ownership, a privately rented home or a more suitable affordable rented home. IOWC expects that the registered providers will develop local protocols for dealing with cases where tenancies will not be renewed.
- 5.4.3. If the tenant refuses to move when the notice period expires, the normal eviction procedure will take effect.

5.5. Right of appeal

- 5.5.1. If a tenant disagrees with the decision reached by their landlord to terminate their tenancy, they may use the appeal process. Each registered provider is expected to set out in its tenancy policy, the appeal process established, and tenants should be directed to this for guidance.

5.6. Advice at end of fixed term

- 5.6.1. Registered providers are expected to set out in their tenancy policies the arrangements they have in place for the provision of comprehensive housing options advice at the end of a fixed term tenancy. IOWC wish to see a plan for provision of this advice set out clearly in each tenancy policy and we expect that registered providers will discuss with IOWC the most effective means of delivering this housing options advice

6. Consultation

- 6.1. Part 7, Chapter 2, Section 151 of the Localism Act 2011 gives the following instructions to local authorities in the preparation of a tenancy strategy:

(1) Before adopting a tenancy strategy, or making a modification to it reflecting a major change of policy, the authority must—

(a) send a copy of the draft strategy, or proposed modification, to every private registered provider of social housing for its district, and

(b) give the private registered provider a reasonable opportunity to comment on those proposals.

(2) Before adopting a tenancy strategy, or making a modification to it reflecting a major change of policy, the authority must also—

(a) consult such other persons as the Secretary of State may by regulations prescribe, and

(b) in the case of an authority that is a London borough council, consult the Mayor of London.

- 6.2. This strategy has been developed with the input from colleagues from registered providers. A consultation draft version of this strategy has been circulated to these colleagues, and to other registered housing providers outlined in Appendix 3 during 2012 and the final version will take on board any comments and views emerging from this.

7. Monitoring

- 7.1. The IOWC and its partner registered providers will review this document annually or sooner if legislative changes or local needs dictate. Particular attention will be paid to the information provided in the Appendices and how this is affected by type of tenancies offered.

Appendix 1 – Strategic links

Allocations policy	Information about how applicants are prioritised for social rented housing can be found in the Island Homefinder Allocations Policy. Applicants whom are deemed to be the most vulnerable in the most acute housing circumstances who have been waiting the longest are prioritised for housing. Monitoring the effectiveness of this Tenancy Strategy can help to inform how applicants are prioritised for social and affordable rented housing in the future.
CBL framework	Irrespective of tenure type and in accordance with the allocations policy, at least 80% of vacancies for social housing will continue to be advertised through our choice based lettings frameworks. Where a property is to be let on a fixed term, this will be clearly indicated on the property advert.
Homelessness strategy	The IOWC most recent Homelessness Strategy sought to prevent homelessness, help those who are homelessness and support people so they didn't return to homelessness. The levels of homelessness acceptances and households in temporary accommodation fell significantly between 2007 and 2011, during the same period the number of households who were prevented from becoming homeless increased. Use of various incentives to help people access accommodation in the private rented sector was the most successful method of finding alternative accommodation before someone became homeless.
Use of private rented sector to resolve homelessness	The Localism Act 2011 will allow local authorities to adopt a power so they can end the statutory homelessness duty by using private rented sector accommodation. The Isle of Wight Council intends to make use of this power once enacted and believe that it will help those facing homelessness access private sector accommodation rather than social rented housing.
The Islands Housing Strategy.	The Council is in the process of updating its Housing Strategy. The current strategy sets out the detail of local housing supply and demand and sets out a clear plan for how these two will be matched. Registered providers should have regard to the relevant housing strategy in framing their tenancy policies.
Government housing strategy "Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England"	<p>The Government's key housing policy goal is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live. To accomplish this, the Government is seeking to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve a wide choice of high quality homes, both affordable and market housing, to address the requirements of the community • Widen opportunities for home ownership and ensure high quality housing for those who cannot afford market housing, in particular those who are vulnerable or in need • Improve affordability across the housing market, including increasing the supply of housing and; • Create sustainable, inclusive, mixed communities in all areas, both urban and rural.

Appendix 2 – Housing Needs Evidence

1. Stock

- 1.1. There are 68,392 properties on the Isle of Wight as of December 2011.
Source: IW Revenues and Benefits
- 1.2. Of these 78% are owner occupied (42% outright; 35% with a mortgage or loan and 1% shared ownership) with 12% being private sector.
Source: Office of National Statistics 2001 Census
- 1.3. Homes owned by registered providers equate to 10% of dwelling stock. In comparison, 14% of stock in the south East of England is social rented, whilst across England this amounts to 19.3%
- 1.4. Numbers of stock owned by the three main providers on the island – Spectrum Medina Housing Association; Southern Housing Group and Vectis Housing Association – amount to 3444; 3234 and 301 respectively, a total of 6979 dwellings.
- 1.5. No housing stock is owned by the local authority.
- 1.6. The number of additional social rented dwellings completed increased by 662 from 2002 to 2011.
- 1.7. The number of additional intermediate affordable homes completed increased by 97 from 2002 to 2011.
- 1.8. The number of additional affordable rented homes completed increased by 1048 from 2002 to 2011.

2. Lettings and Rents

- 2.1. There were 1609 households on the waiting list at 31 March 2002 equal to 1.1% of the population. This has increased to 6,415 households with effect from 8 June 2012 equal to 4.6% of the population which is an increase of 74.9%.
- 2.2. Numbers of lettings per year into social housing amounted to 358 in 2001-02 whilst in 2010-11 the total was 412.

Table 1

Numbers on Isle of Wight Social Housing Waiting List					
Date	31/03/2008	31/03/2009	31/03/2010	31/03/2011	31/03/2012
Numbers	4388	5230	5186	4684	6328

- 2.3. Table 2 below shows the private rental market level rents for the Isle of Wight for periods indicated.

Table 2

Property Size	Average Rental June 2010 - July 2011	Average Rental June 2011 - July 2012
Room	£347	£359
Bedsit	£367	£368
1 Bed	£427	£436
2 Bed	£554	£565
3 Bed	£685	£702
4 Bed	£951	£968

3. Homelessness

- 3.1. During 2005/6 a total of 326 homeless decisions were made resulting in 210 households being accepted as homeless and in priority need, being 64% of the decisions made. On 31 March 2006 there were 332 in number of households living in temporary accommodation.
- 3.2. During 2010/11 a total of 155 homeless decisions were made resulting in 64 households being accepted as homeless and in priority need, being 41% of the decisions made. On 31 March 2011 there were 133 in number of households living in temporary accommodation
- 3.3. From 2005/06 homelessness acceptances have reduced by 73%, decisions fell by 44%; and levels of temporary accommodation decreased by 60%.

4. Total number of households on the Isle of Wight

Year	Total Households
2005/06	64148
2006/07	64816
2007/08	65810
2008/09	66553
2009/10	66,714
2010/11	67,318
2011/12	69,653

5. Total new-build House completions

Year	Total House completions (all types)	Total affordable homes (as part of all homes completed)
2005/06	793	61
2006/07	1645	252
2007/08	603	151
2008/09	635	96
2009/10	440	234
2010/11	445	111
2011/12	535	205

6. Island Population

- 6.1. The Isle of Wight has an estimated population of 140,500 (Mid-2010 ONS estimate). The population on the Island has increased by 14,600 people since 1991, from 125,900, an increase of 10.4%.
- 6.2. Population projections (based on 2010 data) suggest the Island's population will increase to 145,600 (4.2%) by 2022 and to 152,600 (9.2%) by 2035. By far the largest increase is projected to be in the 65+ age group, this group growing by around 62% (or 36% of the total population) by 2035

7. Island Incomes

- 7.1. In 2010 the median gross weekly earnings of Island residents working full-time was £460, a 5.4% increase compared with 2009. However the Island figure represented only 92% of the equivalent national figure and 84% of the equivalent figure in the south east region. The 2010 median gross hourly earnings for Island residents working full-time was £11.54, again lower compared with the south east region (£13.98) and Great Britain (£12.65).

8. Island Housing affordability

- 8.1. The Island's 2006 Housing Needs Survey (the most recent available) identified a clear need for more affordable housing on the Island, across all housing tenures. It identified a shortfall in affordable social housing on the Island, including specific needs among young people and among people needing affordable housing in rural areas.
- 8.2. In terms of private home ownership, the 2006 Housing Needs Survey showed that 80% of new first time buyers on the Island could not afford to buy a property. This is because of the Island's relatively low incomes in relation to house prices. While this is a national issue, national data shows that the Island's ratio of median house price to median earnings in 2010 was 7.82, higher than England (7.01) though lower than the south east region (8.23).
- 8.3. These issues have implications for the Island's housing register, the need for temporary accommodation and homelessness

9. Ratio of median house prices to median earnings by district

Local Authority	Isle of Wight
	Ratio of median house prices to median earnings
2005	8.03
2006	8.80
2007	8.13
2008	8.12
2009	7.14
2010	7.82
2011	7.50

Appendix 2 – Housing Needs Evidence

- 9.1. Land Registry data shows that the median house price in 1991 was £125,900, in 2004 was £138,313, and in 2012 was £151,289. In comparison, the average house price in April 2012 for Portsmouth was £142,735, Southampton was £142,899 and all of England and Wales was £160,417.

Appendix 3 – Registered Providers working on the Island

- Spectrum Medina Housing Association
- Housing 21 Housing Association
- Vectis Housing Association
- Anchor Trust
- Stonham Housing Association
- Hyde Martlet Housing Association
- Abbeyfield Housing Association
- Southern Housing Group
- Places for People
- Reside
- Landspeed
- Island Cottages
- Solent Housing Co-operative
- Western Challenge

1. Recent Welfare Reforms

- 1.1. There have been a series of welfare reforms that the Government has introduced recently which impact on those who currently have a liability to pay rent on accommodation they occupy and for those seeking to move to their first home or alternative accommodation.
- 1.2. In April 2011 the rate of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) dropped from the 50th percentile of collected rental levels to the 30th percentile. On the island this resulted in a previously accessible private rented sector market of 5 out of 10 properties being affordable to only 3 out of 10 properties being affordable, thus reducing the availability of private rented accommodation for some households and increasing the demand for slightly less expensive social housing.
- 1.3. At the same time the Government also removed the 5 bedroom rate of LHA making accommodation for larger families either inaccessible or unaffordable. Whilst Discretionary Housing payments (DHP) could plug the gap of the rental deficit for a while until alternative cheaper accommodation could be sought, given the lack of either PRS or social housing stock of suitable size for these households, their prospects of accessing affordable housing are unrealistic on the island.
- 1.4. The rates of non-dependant deductions were also reconsidered at this time with an increase in contributions from non-dependants in the household expected, impacting on some households in the amount of LHA they received dropping.
- 1.5. The Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) currently applies to single people who are aged under 25 on Housing Benefit in the private rented sector. These claimants are restricted to the rate for a single room in a shared house, rather than the rate for a self-contained one bedroom property. The SAR causes considerable problems for young people, with many unable to secure or sustain affordable accommodation and left facing shortfalls, arrears and homelessness.
- 1.6. From January 2012, the Government extended this lower rate to claimants under the age of 35. On the island this has meant that claimants previously entitled to the one bedroom rate, currently at £91.15 per week, will see their LHA entitlement drop to £68.50 per week, a reduction of £22.65 a week.
- 1.7. The cuts mean that 25 to 34 year-olds' only hope will be to find a room in a shared house but there is only a limited pool of this type of accommodation available. What's more, even if they find a property, for most people, this lower Shared Accommodation Rate doesn't cover the rent, causing hardship and risking homelessness.

2. Welfare Reform Act 2012

- 2.1. The Welfare Reform Act received Royal Assent on 8th March 2012. The Act introduces a new Universal Credit which will replace most existing benefits and limits the total amount of benefit a person can claim. It also introduces a new size criteria or 'bedroom tax' in the social rented sector. The welfare reforms impact on the way tenants receive benefit, in many cases, removing the option of having benefits paid direct to landlords.

3. Size Criteria

- 3.1. The Welfare Reform Act gives the Government the power to introduce new size criteria (also known as ‘under-occupation penalty’ or ‘Bedroom Tax’) for housing benefit claims in the social rented sector. The criteria will mean that any working-age household deemed to be under-occupying their home will lose part of their housing benefit from April 2013.
- 3.2. Working age is expected to be defined as under 61 when the criteria comes into effect in April 2013. The cut will be a fixed percentage of the Housing Benefit-eligible rent. This will be set initially at a 14% cut for one extra bedroom and a 25% cut for two or more extra bedrooms. Therefore the higher the rent the higher the amount of money will be deducted from Housing Benefit each week. The same percentage cut will be applied to the new ‘affordable’ rents, set at up-to-80% of the market rate.
- 3.3. The Government has said those with one ‘spare’ bedroom will lose on average £12 per week (£624 per year) and those with two or more ‘spare’ bedrooms will lose on average £22 per week (£1,144 per year). Overall, those affected will lose on average just over £14 per week, or £738 per year.
- 3.4. Many landlords support people to downsize from their property to free up badly needed family size homes, and the size criteria for Housing Benefit will bring a greater financial imperative to downsizing. However, the DWP’s impact assessment admits there is a ‘mismatch’ between household size and the availability of suitable homes in the social sector for under-occupying claimants to downsize into. It says: ‘In many areas this mismatch could mean that there are insufficient properties to enable tenants to move to accommodation of an appropriate size even if tenants wished to move and landlords were able to facilitate this movement.’
- 3.5. In the South East it is anticipated that an estimated 50,000 claimants will be affected by this change in criteria equating to 26% of claimants. Housing associations on the island will need to know from their own stock profile the situation for their tenants and provide appropriate advice and assistance to their tenants on how to address the possible shortfalls that they may face. The Allocations Policy for the Island HomeFinder scheme will also have to include in its reviews how to address the need to move people into appropriate accommodation to relieve the impact of residing in unaffordable accommodation.
- 3.6. The Department for Work and Pensions has announced that an additional £30m per year will be made available in the form of discretionary payments for local councils, specifically to help ‘around 40,000 households’, including disabled people and foster carers, caught by the under-occupation penalty. Of this, £25m is expected to be targeted at disabled people in adapted properties and £5m at foster families. Housing Associations on the island can provide advice and assistance to their tenants on how to make their homes affordable by claiming DHP whilst they seek alternative options to finding more affordable accommodation.

Source: National Housing Federation Briefing Paper – Welfare Reform Act 2012 Size Criteria March 2012

4. Benefit Cap

- 4.1. From April 2013 the Government will introduce a cap on the total amount of benefits that working-age people can receive so that households on working-age benefits can no longer receive more in benefits than the average wage for working families. On its introduction it is estimated that the cap will be set at £500 per week for couple and single parent households and the cap will be set at £350 per week for single adult households without children.
- 4.2. The cap will apply to the combined income a household receives from the main out of work benefits (Job Seeker's Allowance and Employment Support Allowance), Housing Benefit, Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit and Carer's Allowance. Once households have been transferred to Universal Credit, it will apply to their combined income from Universal Credit and benefits including Child Benefit and Carer's Allowance.
- 4.3. The cap is targeted at out-of-work-families. The DWP estimates that about 67,000 households will be affected by the measure in 2013/14 rising to 75,000 in 2014/15. In 2013/14 this means that 90,000 adults and 220,000 children will be affected. It is expected that 44% of those affected will live in the social rented sector and 56% in the private rented sector.
- 4.4. The Department for Work and Pensions estimates that affected households will lose an average of £83 a week – nearly £4,500 per year. DWP calculations have already indicated that 78 families on the island will be affected by the Benefit Cap and these families have been targeted with letters being sent out in April 2012 informing claimants of the changes advising what advice and support is available either from the DWP to find work or from housing services to seek more affordable accommodation.
- 4.5. The Government has confirmed that claimants made homeless by the cap will not be considered intentionally homeless, therefore local authorities will have a statutory duty to house them.

Source: National Housing Federation Briefing Paper – Welfare Reform Act 2012 – Benefit Cap

5. Universal Credit

- 5.1. In October 2013 the Government plans to merge a number of means tested benefits including Housing Benefit, Income Support and Job Seekers Allowance into a new single benefit - the Universal Credit. Apart from a small number of exceptional cases, Universal Credit will be paid monthly in arrears as a single payment to the household.
- 5.2. Under these plans the Government wants to see many more social housing tenants receiving the money in their hand rather than opting to have their benefit paid direct to their landlord.
- 5.3. This is likely to lead to an increased level of arrears and debt for tenants already living on low incomes with increased costs for landlords including:
 - Arrears recovery, slower payment times and bad debt
 - Legal costs
 - Need for additional housing management staff

Appendix 4 – Emerging Issues for Island Residents

- Need to support tenants and establish new payment collection methods
- Transaction costs
- Impact on the attitude of lenders to the sector

5.4. Housing Associations will need to take these changes into account when formulating their business plans and working with their tenants to ensure that they are aware of the changes and ensure that they have access to advice and support particularly in the area of budgeting and understanding their responsibility to pay their priority debts if they are to keep their arrears figures to a minimum.

6. Localism Act

6.1. On 15 November 2011 the Localism Act came into force. The Act aims to devolve greater powers to local councils and community organisations. In housing terms this allows local authorities to have greater flexibility to determine who qualifies for housing locally and the tenure by which tenancies are granted, with an emphasis on social housing being for those in greatest need and for the period that they require accommodation.

7. Qualifying Person

7.1. Secondary legislation is still to follow later in 2012 but this will focus on providing guidance on how local authorities can administer their housing registers and who can gain access to their waiting lists as a 'qualifying person'. Once this legislation is confirmed further consideration will need to be given to reviewing the Island HomeFinder Allocation Policy to ensure that the allocation of accommodation on the island is carried out to meet the islands needs.

8. Armed forces personnel

8.1. The Government has also introduced a statutory instrument which provides that preference shall be given to serving, ex-serving Armed Forces personnel, bereaved spouses of service personnel, seriously injured members of Reserve Forces or serving members of the Armed Forces who have been seriously injured who are seeking social housing. This allows for such applicants to gain access to housing registers despite their lack of local connection to the area to which they are applying and to exclude them from being disqualified from any Qualifying Person criteria a local authority may set for their housing register. It also states that such applicants should be given priority where in 'urgent housing need'.

8.2. It is not clear the impact this change in legislation may have for the island given that it is not an area with a great military presence, however, a recent study of the veteran's population in Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire by 145 (South) Brigade in December 2011 provides some useful information to consider.

8.3. There are no serving armed forces personnel stationed on the Isle of Wight compared to 7,620 in Portsmouth, the highest number of personnel stationed in a district across Hampshire. There were 74,886 armed forces war pensions in payment across the South East region in 2009-10 and as of 31 March 2012 7,495 were in payment in Hampshire, 570 of which were from the Isle of Wight compared to 835 in Portsmouth, the Isle of Wight being the 6th largest recipient of war pensions in Hampshire.

Appendix 4 – Emerging Issues for Island Residents

- 8.4. Data provided by the Joint Personnel Administration Business Information Cell indicated that as of January 2011 there were no ex-service leavers listed as being on the reserve list residing in the Isle of Wight area compared to 435 in the Portsmouth, the second highest in Hampshire behind Rushmoor.
- 8.5. Armed forces pensions paid to individuals residing on the Isle of Wight amount to 1265 compared to Gosport Borough Council which reports the highest number of individuals receiving pensions in Hampshire at 4,815, the total for Hampshire being 31,585.
- 8.6. The study goes on to attempt to identify whether there is a link between affordable housing and the resettlement of armed forces personnel. Research shows that in some areas the numbers of personnel are much higher than the number of pensions paid in an area. An example of this would be Wycombe District in Buckinghamshire, which has the seventh highest population of serving personnel in the study area, but ranks nineteenth in terms of pensions paid. Havant is the opposite, with no service personnel stationed in the area but a high percentage of the veterans' population. Interestingly, Havant is seventh cheapest in the housing prices as per below table 4.2, and Wycombe ranks at twenty-second. This may indicate that veterans are taking housing affordability into account when determining resettlement area. However, there are examples of where this is not the case, even in the cheaper areas for housing such as Southampton. There are no serving personnel in Southampton, or service housing and likewise exceptionally small numbers of ex-service personnel according to the populations studied.

9. Discharge of Homelessness Duty into Private Rented Sector

- 9.1. One further major change to housing being brought about by the Localism Act is the power for local authorities to discharge the homelessness duty by offering suitable accommodation in the private rented sector. The main thrust of this change is to ensure that those households accepted as statutory homeless do not insist on being offered social housing when there is suitable alternative accommodation available to them in the private sector, and so that social landlords can make best use of their stock.
- 9.2. This accommodation does however have to meet suitability standards, the consultation for which is currently ongoing. Once this has been finalised the Isle of Wight Council will need to determine whether this discharge of duty can be met by the use of PRS accommodation on the island and if so, formulate a policy for doing so.
- 9.3. The advantage of this change will be that households accepted as statutorily homeless will have more options available to them to secure suitable accommodation at an earlier stage than waiting for in demand social housing.
- 9.4. It is also anticipated that this tool will lead to the prevention of homelessness applications being made as applicants become aware that a homelessness application will not be a fast track route to social housing and be more ready to accept the offer of assistance to access PRS accommodation in order to alleviate their housing situation prior to a homeless application having to be made.